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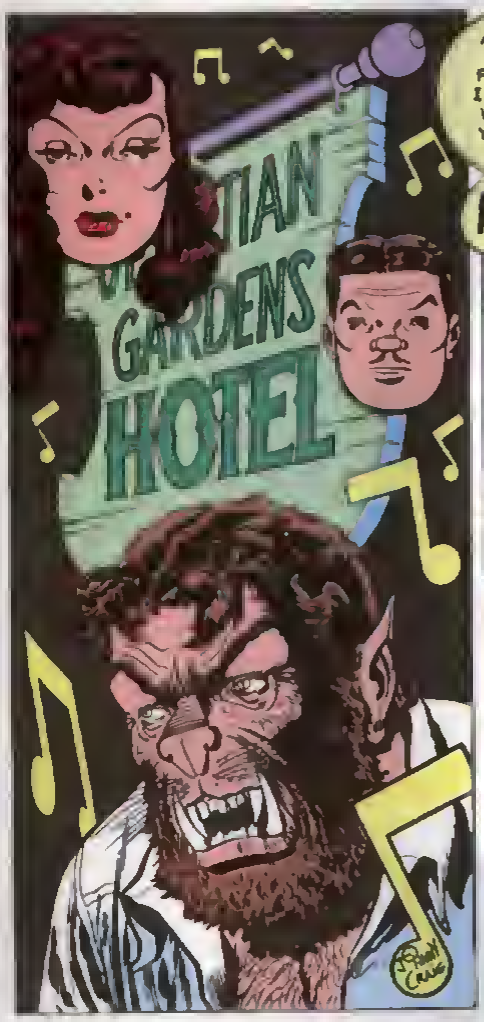
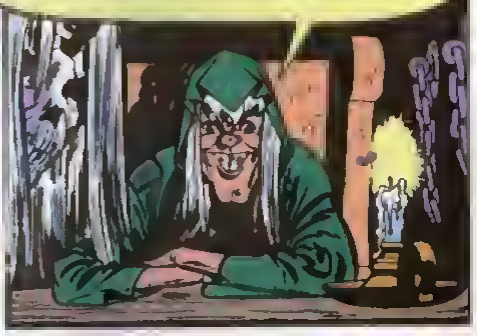
Vault of Horror (USPS 006307) Vol. 1 No. 6 October 1993 Published quarterly in October January April and July by Russ Cochran, Publisher 202 Ald West Plains MO 65775-3532 **Second-class postage paid at West Plains MO** Entire contents © 1993 by William M. Gaines Agent Inc. Vault of Horror #16 © 1950 by E.L. Publishing Co. Inc. re © 1982 by William M. Gaines Agent Inc. All rights reserved. Nothing herein contained may be reproduced without the written permission of William M. Gaines New York New York. Annual subscription rate $6 ($12 outside US payable in US funds) Printed in U.S.A. **Postmaster: send address changes to Vault of Horror, Russ Cochran, POB 469, West Plains, MO 65775-0469.**

THE VAULT OF HORROR!



HA! HA! HA! WELL...YOU READERS MUST HAVE STOUT HEARTS TO CONTINUE COMING BACK FOR MORE OF MY GRUESOME TALES! THIS TIME I HAVE A *REAL SHOCKER* FOR YOU! A STORY THAT WILL SEND VIBRANT CHILLS OF TERROR THROUGH YOU AND RACK YOUR BODY WITH ITS SUSPENSE! THIS YARN, FROM MY PRIVATE COLLECTION IS CALLED—

WEREWOLF CONCERTO!



OUR STORY OPENS IN THE ONLY HOTEL IN THE SMALL TOWN OF LEINTZ, HUNGARY. IT IS NIGHT... AND TO SOME OF THE GUESTS IT IS AN EVENING OF QUIET REPOSE. BUT FOR ONE OF THEM, IT IS A GRIM, HORRID MOMENT OF VICIOUS *DEATH!*

HORRIBLE! TORN TO SHREDS!
THIS IS THE THIRD TIME IT'S HAPPENED!
THE HOTEL MANAGER IS NAMED HUBERT ANTONE... A QUIET, NERVOUS INDIVIDUAL WHO IS NOTHING LESS THAN APPALLED AT THE HIDEOUS EVENT! BUT THEN...WHO WOULDN'T BE? HEH! HEH!
I'M CHECKING OUT! THREE DEATHS IN THREE MONTHS IS TOO MUCH!
WHAT KIND OF A HOTEL IS THIS, ANYWAY?
PLEASE! PLEASE... I BEG YOU!
I'M NOT GOING TO STAY IN THIS PLACE AND BE MURDERED!
NEITHER AM I!
BUT...BUT THE POLICE WILL CATCH THE KILLER!
BAH! THREE TIMES IT'S HAPPENED! ALL THE SAME WAY!
SURE! IT'S AWFUL! I'M GETTING OUT!
ALL RIGHT, GENTLEMEN... I CAN'T BLAME YOU!
YES.. HEH, HEH! THREE MURDERS IN THREE MONTHS IS ENOUGH TO RUIN ANY HOTEL!
OH-H...THIS IS TERRIBLE! THE HOTEL IS GETTING A BAD REPUTATION! IF I DON'T DO SOMETHING SOON, I'LL BE RUINED!
BUT WHAT CAN I DO? WHAT? I...EH?.. WAIT! WHAT'S THIS?
2

'MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE... FAMED CONCERT PIANIST... TO GIVE CONCERTS IN BRAVDA! BRAVDA? WHY, THAT'S NOT FIVE MILES FROM HERE! SAY-Y...THAT GIVES ME AN IDEA!
MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE? THIS IS HUBERT ANTONE, MANAGER OF THE FAMOUS VENETIAN GARDENS HOTEL IN LEINTZ! I WISH TO OFFER YOU MY FINEST HOTEL SUITE TO USE DURING YOUR ENGAGEMENT IN BRAVDA! I OFFER IT TO YOU... FREE!
YOU ARE TOO KIND, M'SIEU! I AM HAPPY TO ACCEPT!
HA! HA! WITH MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE AS MY GUEST, THE TOURISTS WILL FIGHT TO GAIN ENTRANCE! HA! HA! I'M A GENIUS!
YES, HUBERT WAS PROUD OF HIMSELF, AND THAT NIGHT HE SLEPT BLISSFULLY! HOWEVER, THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON, A LARGE TRUCK PULLED TO A STOP IN FRONT OF THE HOTEL!
JUST A MOMENT! WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? I DIDN'T ORDER ANY PIANO! OUR SUITES ARE ALL COMPLETELY FURNISHED!
THIS IS MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE'S PERSONAL CONCERT PIANO! WHERE SHE GOES, THIS GOES, TOO!
MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE? PERSONAL PIANO? OH!... OH, OF COURSE! CERTAINLY! CERTAINLY! RIGHT THIS WAY!
THIS IS OUR FINEST SUITE! IT COVERS ONE ENTIRE FLOOR! I'LL HAVE THIS PIANO REMOVED SO YOU CAN SET HERS IN ITS PLACE! ER...ANY IDEA WHEN THE MADEMOISELLE WILL ARRIVE?
PROBABLY TODAY. SHE DOESN'T LET THIS PIANO OUT OF HER SIGHT FOR LONG!
3

HUBERT WAS *ECSTATIC* WITH JOY! HE WAITED ALL DAY IN ANXIOUS ANTICIPATION...BUT MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE DION'T ARRIVE! LATE THAT EVENING...
..HER CLOTHES AND PERSONAL BELONGINGS CAME, SIR, BUT NOT *HER!*
NOT YET, EH? PERHAPS SHE'S NOT COMING UNTIL TOMORROW!
CLERK
DESK
...*WHAT THE DEVIL!* THAT...THAT GIRL STEPPING FROM THE ELEVATOR! *IT'S MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE!*
HOLY SMOKES! WHEN DID *SHE* GO UP?
CLE
MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE! IT'S AN HONOR TO HAVE YOU AS OUR GUEST! I MUST APOLOGIZE FOR NOT BEING ON HAND TO GREET YOU! AH..WE DIDN'T SEE YOU CHECK IN...
QUITE ALL RIGHT, M'SIEU. IT IS OF NO CONSEQUENCE. I SHALL BE OUT ALL EVENING. PLEASE SEE THAT NO ONE ENTERS MY ROOM!
IDIOT! YOU SAID SHE *DIDN'T* ARRIVE! WHY DIDN'T YOU *TELL* ME SHE WAS HERE?!
BUT..BUT SHE *DIDN'T* ARRIVE! I MEAN, SHE *DIDN'T* CHECK IN! SEE? THE REGISTER HASN'T BEEN SIGNED! MAYBE THE ELEVATOR BOY...
CL
HONEST, MR. ANTONE! I'VE BEEN ON DUTY ALL DAY, AND I *SWEAR* I DION'T TAKE HER UP! SOMEBODY RANG THE *DOWN* BUZZER ON HER PRIVATE FLOOR...*AND THERE SHE WAS!*
HMPH! SLEEPING ON THE JOB, PROBABLY! I'VE NEVER BEEN SO EMBARRASSED!
HEH, HEH! WELL ANYWAY, FRIENDS, WEEKS PASSED AND THE HOTEL BEGAN TO PROSPER AGAIN! HUBERT WAS VERY HAPPY! BUT LOVELY MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE INTRIGUED HIM..
PUZZLING..CAN'T UNDERSTAND HER. NEVER SEE HER DURING THE DAY...SAYS SHE PRACTICES AT NIGHT! YET NO ONE HAS EVER *HEARD* HER PRACTICE! ..MAYBE SHE'S A *PHONEY?*

RIDICULOUS! TOO WELL KNOWN TO BE A PHONEY! NEVER SEEMS TO EAT...NOT IN THE *HOTEL*,ANYWAY! STRANGE GIRL.. CAN'T FIGURE HER...
YES, EVERYTHING WAS FINE! GUESTS CONTINUED TO ARRIVE AND THE FUTURE LOOKED BRIGHT. IT SEEMED THAT PEOPLE HAD FORGOTTEN ABOUT THE GORY MURDERS...UNTIL ONE NIGHT..
...A CROUCHED, FURTIVE, FIGURE PROWLED THROUGH THE HOTEL HALLS AND QUIETLY ENTERED ONE OF THE ROOMS...
?
AAAAGGH-HHH!
HEH, HEH, HEH! YEP, IT HAPPENED AGAIN! THE SAME WAY AS THE OTHERS... WITH THE VICTIM BRUTALLY TORN AND RIPPED TO PIECES! AND WHAT A COMMOTION *THAT* CAUSED! IN NO TIME AT ALL, GUESTS AND EMPLOYEES STREAMED FROM THE HOTEL!
I'M NOT STAYING HERE ANY LONGER! THE POLICE SAY A *WEREWOLF* IS WHAT KILLED THOSE PEOPLE!
YEAH! I WON'T STAY IN THIS PLACE EITHER!
I'M GOING, TOO!
...I WOULDN'T BE FOUND *DEAD* IN THIS JOINT!
5

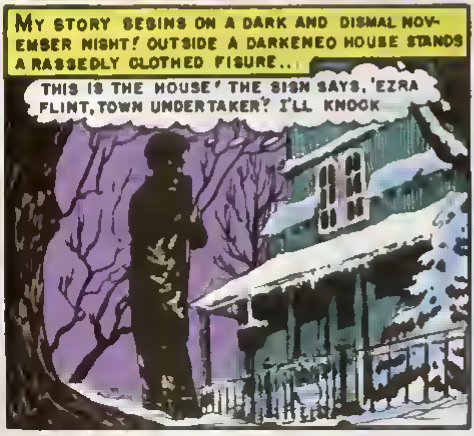
MY WIFE AND I ARE CHECKING OUT! IF THERE'S A WEREWOLF AROUND, WE'LL VACATION ELSEWHERE!
I...I UNDERSTAND, SIR...
EVERYONE'S GONE! EVERYONE! EVEN ALL MY EMPLOYEES HAVE LEFT! I'M...I'M RUINED!
POOR HUBERT! BUT WHAT COULD HE EXPECT? NOT MANY PEOPLE APPRECIATE BEING MURDERED! HEH, HEH! WELL, AS BEFORE, WEEKS PASSED, AND HUBERT WAS ALONE IN THE HOTEL... EXCEPT FOR ONE OTHER PERSON!
MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE! IT IS SO GOOD OF YOU TO REMAIN! I AM SORRY I CANNOT GIVE YOU BETTER SERVICE, BUT...
DO NOT APOLOGIZE, M'SIEU! I KNOW YOU CANNOT GET ANYONE TO WORK HERE. THEY ARE ALL AFRAID!
YES! YES! YOU'RE RIGHT! YOU'RE SO UNDERSTANDING! SHALL I TAKE YOU TO YOUR SUITE?
NO, THANK YOU, M'SIEU. I HAVE LEARNED TO OPERATE THE ELEVATOR MYSELF! GOOD NIGHT!
ACH! I'M A NERVOUS WRECK! WISH I COULD GET A DECENT NIGHT'S REST! I...I... FEEL SO STRANGE ALL OF A SUDDEN...
FEEL LIKE... LIKE...OH, NO! NOT AGAIN... I...I CAN'T FIGHT IT! I HAVE TO GIVE IN... HAVE TO...
6

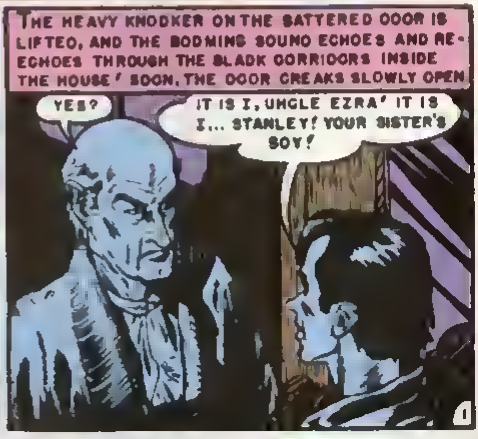
HA! HA! HA! SURPRISED? HEH, HEH! YES, EVERY MONTH, ON THE NIGHT OF THE FULL MOON, HUBERT ANTONE BECAME TRANSFORMED INTO A SNARLING SAVAGE WEREWOLF! AND, AS ALWAYS, THERE WAS BUT ONE THING IN HIS MIND... HE MUST FIND A VICTIM!
...NO ONE HERE! NEED TO FIND SOMEONE! NO ONE HERE... WAIT! THERE IS SOMEONE! MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE!
...IN HER SUITE! THAT'S WHERE SHE IS... IN HER SUITE! I KNOW SHE'S THERE!
CAN'T FIND HER! WHERE IS SHE? ..KNOW SHE'S HERE! WHERE? WHERE?
SEARCHED EVERY ROOM! NOT HERE! NO ONE ELSE AROUND! I NEED A VICTIM! BLAST IT! WHERE IS SHE?!
UNDEPENDABLE WOMAN! I'M GOING CRAZY! I'VE GOT TO FIND HER!
BLAST IT! BLAST IT!
THUNK THUNK
? ? ?
7

WHAT THE OEVIL??? HER PIANO...IT DION'T MAKE ANY NOISE WHEN I HIT THE KEYS! ???
...SOMETHING COCKEYED... NO MUSIC!
CLUNK!
CLUNK CLUNK!
WHAT THE...? NO STRINGS IN IT! NO STRINGS! ONLY... ONLY DIRT!
DIRT! WHY IN THE WORLO WOULD SHE KEEP DIRT IN HER PIANO...UNLESS... UNLESS..
GOOD LORD! I KNOW WHY! AND I KNOW WHY NO ONE EVER HEARD HER PRACTICE... ANO WHY SHE NEVER EATS!
OF COURSE! IT'S ALL CLEAR NOW! THAT'S WHY NO ONE SEES HER DURING THE DAY... ONLY AT NIGHT! BECAUSE... BECAUSE SHE SLEEPS ALL DAY...HERE IN THIS PIANO! SHE'S...SHE'S A...
VAMPIRE!
-THE END-
HEH, HEH, HEH! NOW THERE WAS A STIRRING FINALE THAT I THOUGHT WAS IN GOOO TASTE! MADEMOISELLE MICHELINE REALLY ENDEO HER SOLO WITH A HOT LICK, OIDN'T SHE? WELL, AFTER THAT, YOU CAN BE SURE NO ONE WAS BOTHERED BY WEREWOLVES! HOWEVER THEY DID HAVE SOME RUN-INS WITH A VAMPIRE! HEH! HEH! BUT READ ON, FRIENDS! THERE ARE MORE CHILLS AWAITING YOU!

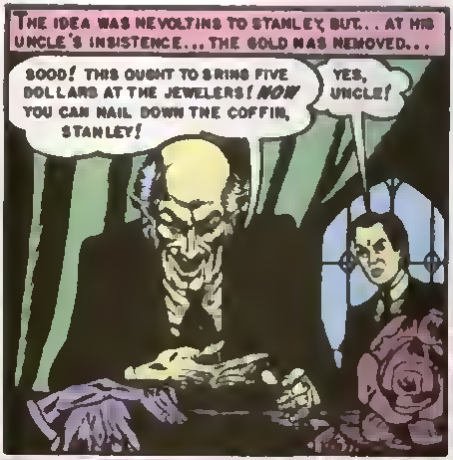
HERE IS A CHILLING TALE CONCERNING A MISERLY OLD UNDERTAKER AND THE HORROR OF HIS

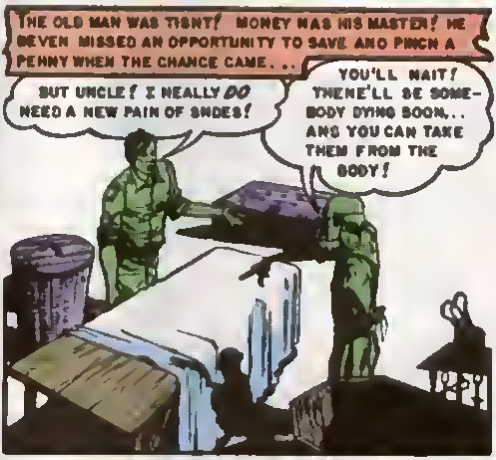
FITTING PUNISHMENT

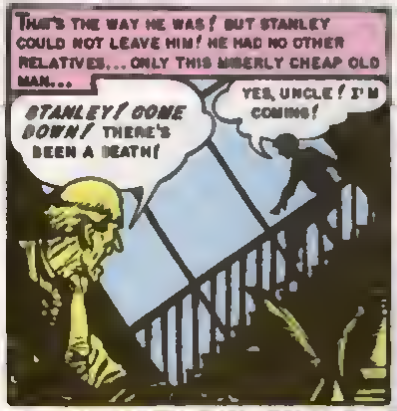


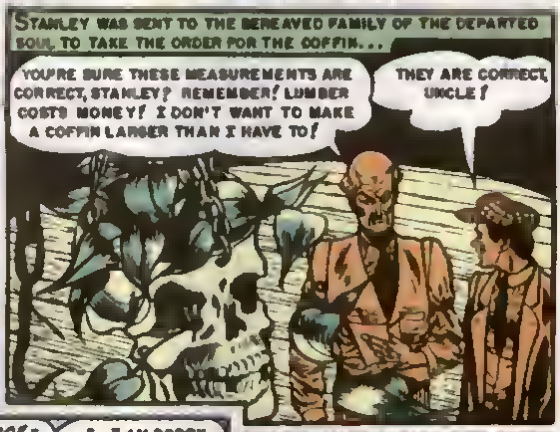


WHAT DO YOU WANT?
LET ME DOME IH! IT IS COLD AND I AM CRILLED YO THE BONE!
THE WRINKLED OLD MAN MOVES ASIDE AND THE TATTERED FIGURE OF THE YOUTH STEPS INSIDE...
LORD, UNCLE! IT IS AS COLD IN HERE AS IT IS OUT THERE! NO FIRE...
FIRES BURN COAL! COAL COSTS MONEY! WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?
IT IS MY MOTHER! SHE IS DEAD! I HAVE COME TO LIVE WITH YOU!
WHAT? BUT... I... CAN'T AFFORD IT! YOU'LL HAVE TO BE CLOTHED.. FED...
I'LL WORK, UNCLE! I'LL PAY FOR MY KEEP! I CAN CUT WOOD FOR THE FIRE... HELP YOU IN THE SHOP...
NNNNN! VERY WELL! BUT REMEMBER! NO WORK, NO FOOD!
AND THAT IS HOW STANLEY CAME TO LIVE WITH OLD EZRA, THE TOWN UNDERTAKER...
AND AFTER YOU FINISH CLEANING THE SHOP, YOU CAN HELP ME SAND-PAPER THIS COFFIN!
YES, UNCLE EZRA!
EZRA WAS HARD ON THE BOY! HE WORKED HIM WITHOUT A LET-UP! EZRA WAS CHEAP AND MISERLY, AND STANLEY LEARNED MANY HORRIBLE THINGS ABOUT HIM ..
WAIT, YOU FOOL! DON'T NAIL DOWN THE COFFIN, YET!
BUT, THE FAMILY HAVE ALL SEEN THE BODY! THE FUNERAL PROCESSION WILL BE HERE SOON...
THE BOLD! WE HAVEN'T REMOVED THE GOLD FROM HIS TEETH YET! IF YOU ARE GOING TO BE MY CHARGE, STANLEY, YOU MUST AS WELL LEARN EVERYTHING THERE IS TO KNOW!
REMOVE THE GOLD FROM HIS TEETH?
2


THE IDEA WAS REVOLTING TO STANLEY, BUT... AT HIS UNCLE'S INSISTENCE... THE GOLD WAS REMOVED...
GOOD! THIS OUGHT TO BRING FIVE DOLLARS AT THE JEWELERS! NOW YOU CAN NAIL DOWN THE COFFIN, STANLEY!
YES, UNCLE!


THE OLD MAN WAS TIGHT! MONEY WAS HIS MASTER! HE NEVER MISSED AN OPPORTUNITY TO SAVE AND PINCH A PENNY WHEN THE CHANCE CAME...
BUT UNCLE! I REALLY DO NEED A NEW PAIR OF SHOES!
YOU'LL WAIT! THERE'LL BE SOMEBODY DYING SOON... AND YOU CAN TAKE THEM FROM THE BODY!


THAT'S THE WAY HE WAS! BUT STANLEY COULD NOT LEAVE HIM! HE HAD NO OTHER RELATIVES... ONLY THIS MISERLY CHEAP OLD MAN...
STANLEY! COME DOWN! THERE'S BEEN A DEATH!
YES, UNCLE! I'M COMING!


STANLEY WAS SENT TO THE BEREAVED FAMILY OF THE DEPARTED SOUL, TO TAKE THE ORDER FOR THE COFFIN...
YOU'RE SURE THESE MEASUREMENTS ARE CORRECT, STANLEY? REMEMBER! LUMBER COSTS MONEY! I DON'T WANT TO MAKE A COFFIN LARGER THAN I HAVE TO!
THEY ARE CORRECT, UNCLE!

WHEN THE COFFIN WAS FINISHED, A MEMBER OF THE DEAD MAN'S FAMILY CAME TO SEE IT...
BUT...THIS IS A PINE COFFIN!
DIDN'T YOU ORDER A PINE COFFIN?

WHY, NO! I ORDERED OAK!
I...I AM SORRY, SIR! I WILL MAKE AN OAK ONE AT ONCE!

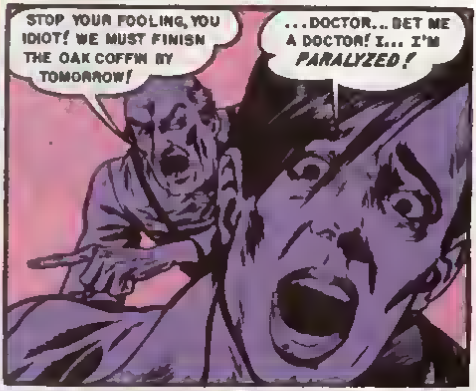
AFTER THE MOURNER LEFT...
STANLEY! COME DOWN HERE! AT ONCE!
COMING, UNCLE!

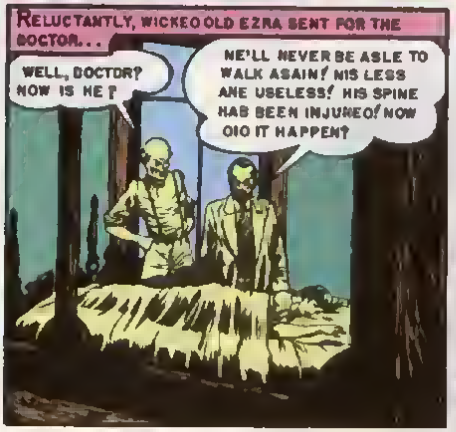
STUPID! STUPID! WE HAVE WORKED IN VAIN! THEY ORDERED AN OAK COFFIN!
BUT... I...

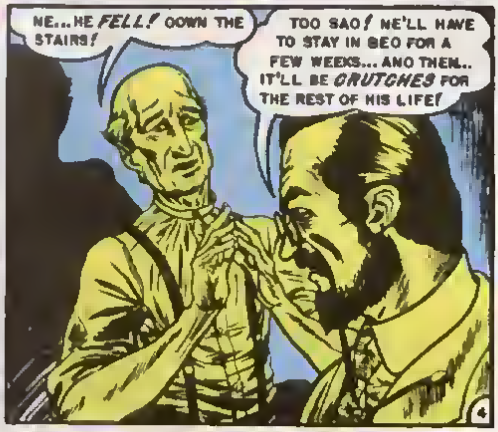
I'LL TEACH YOU TO TAKE THE ORDER CORRECTLY FROM NOW ON!
BUT, UNCLE! I TOLD YOU OAK...

GRABBING A HAMMER, THE MADDENED UNCLE STRUCK POOR STANLEY ACROSS HIS BACK...
STUPID! STUPID!
Y-I-I-I-I!

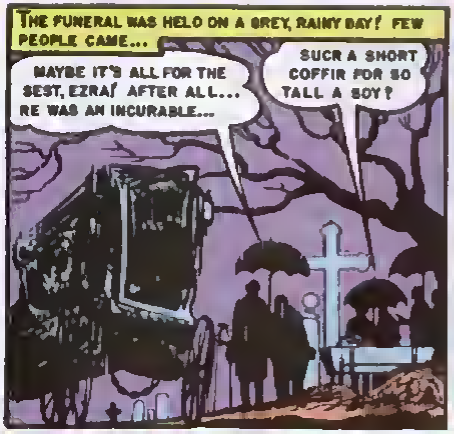
STANLEY WENT DOWN WRITHING IN PAIN! THEN HE FAINTED! HE WAS UNCONSCIOUS FOR SEVERAL HOURS! WHEN HE CAME TO...
IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU CAME AROUND! HURRY! WE HAVE WORK TO DO!
MY LEGS! I CAN'T MOVE MY LEGS!

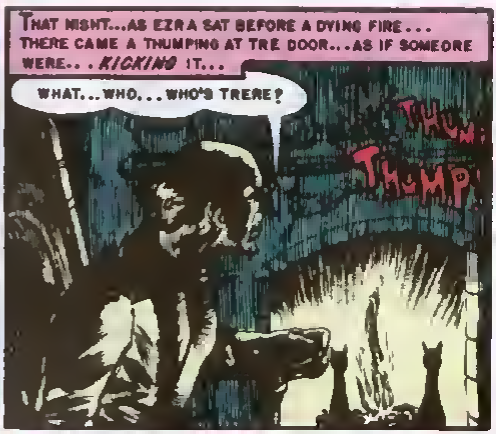

STOP YOUR FOOLING, YOU IDIOT! WE MUST FINISH THE OAK COFFIN BY TOMORROW!
...DOCTOR... BET ME A DOCTOR! I... I'M PARALYZED!


RELUCTANTLY, WICKED OLD EZRA SENT FOR THE DOCTOR...
WELL, DOCTOR? HOW IS HE?
HE'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO WALK AGAIN! HIS LEGS ARE USELESS! HIS SPINE HAS BEEN INJURED! HOW DID IT HAPPEN?


HE... HE FELL! DOWN THE STAIRS!
TOO BAD! HE'LL HAVE TO STAY IN BED FOR A FEW WEEKS... AND THEN.. IT'LL BE CRUTCHES FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE!

SOMEHOW, OLD EZRA MANAGED TO FINISH THE OAK COFFIN IN TIME FOR THE FUNERAL! BUT THE PINE COFFIN... WHAT COULD HE DO WITH THAT?
I'LL SAVE IT! I MAY BE ABLE TO USE IT ON ANOTHER BODY...
THE WEEKS WENT BY AND STANLEY BEGAN TO MOVE ABOUT ON HIS CRUTCHES...
WHAT GOOD ARE YOU, NOW? YOU CAN'T WORK! ALL YOU'LL DO IS COST ME MONEY!
TOO BAD, UNCLE! YOU SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT THAT BEFORE YOU HIT MY BACK WITH THAT HAMMER!
AND AS THE MONTHS WENT BY, OLD EZRA FLINT GREW MORE AND MORE SULLEN! THEN, ONE NIGHT... WHILE STARING AT THE UNUSED PINE COFFIN... HE GOT AN IDEA...
WHY NOT? HA! I COULD KILL TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE! I'D USE THE COFFIN, AND I'D BE RID OF THAT HELPLESS CRIPPLE...
AND SO ONE DARK NIGHT, AS STANLEY HOBBLED UP THE STAIRS ON HIS CRUTCHES...
LET ME BY, UNCLE! I... I...
THEY CALLED IT AN ACCIDENTAL DEATH, AND EZRA BEGAN TO MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR THE FUNERAL...
YOU SEE, STANLEY? YOUR MISTAKE ISN'T ALL WASTED! IT'S *YOUR* COFFIN NOW! *HUH?*
GOOD LORD! I NEVER THOUGHT! HE... HE'S TOO *TALL!* HE DOESN'T *FIT!* I... I *WON'T* MAKE *ANOTHER* COFFIN TO FIT HIM! THAT WOULD COST *MONEY!* I... I KNOW! *I KNOW WHAT TO DO!*
5

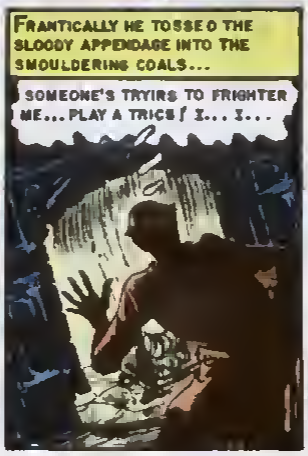

THE FUNERAL WAS HELD ON A GREY, RAINY DAY! FEW PEOPLE CAME...
MAYBE IT'S ALL FOR THE BEST, EZRA! AFTER ALL... HE WAS AN INCURABLE...
SUCH A SHORT COFFIN FOR SO TALL A BOY?


THAT NIGHT...AS EZRA SAT BEFORE A DYING FIRE... THERE CAME A THUMPING AT THE DOOR...AS IF SOMEONE WERE... KICKING IT...
WHAT...WHO...WHO'S THERE?
THUMP!
THUMP!

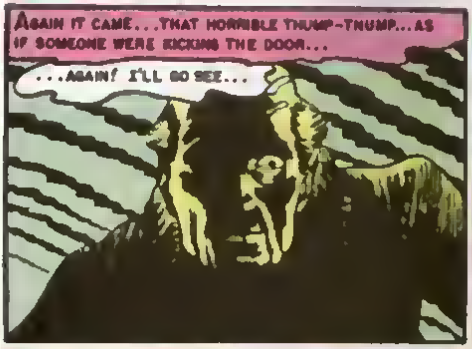
SLOWLY EZRA OPENED THE DOOR AND LOOKED OUT...
WHY, THERE'S NO ONE HERE! I...I...

THEN HIS GLANCE FELL UPON THE GROUND! THERE, AT THE DOORSTEP, LAY A FOOT...
STANLEY'S FOOT!

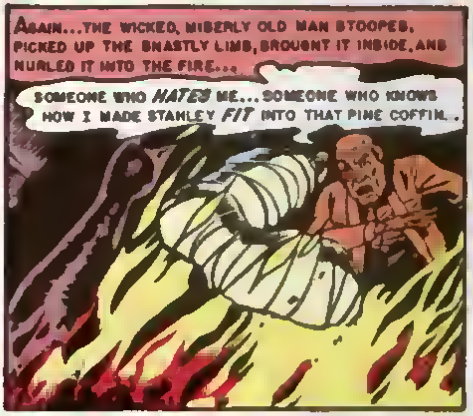
QUICKLY, EZRA SNATCHED THE FOOT FROM WHERE IT LAY AND RUSHED INTO THE HOUSE WITH IT...
SOMEONE KNOWS! SOMEONE KNOWS WHAT I'VE DONE!


FRANTICALLY HE TOSSED THE BLOODY APPENDAGE INTO THE SMOULDERING COALS...
SOMEONE'S TRYING TO FRIGHTEN ME... PLAY A TRICK! I... I...

THUMP!
THUM!


AGAIN IT CAME...THAT HORRIBLE THUMP-THUMP...AS IF SOMEONE WERE KICKING THE DOOR...
...AGAIN? I'LL GO SEE...

THERE ON THE STEP BEFORE THE DOOR LAY ANOTHER SEVERED FOOT...
WHO COULD IT BE? WHO IS TRYING TO TORTURE ME?


AGAIN...THE WICKED, MISERLY OLD MAN STOOPED, PICKED UP THE GHASTLY LIMB, BROUGHT IT INSIDE, AND HURLED IT INTO THE FIRE...
SOMEONE WHO HATES ME...SOMEONE WHO KNOWS HOW I MADE STANLEY FIT INTO THAT PINE COFFIN..

AND THEN...THE DOORKNOCKER BOOMED...
NOW...NOW HE IS KNOCKING!

THERE'S SOMEONE OUT THERE! I CAN SEE HIS SHADOW!

YES?

NO! NO! IT CAN'T BE...
THE END...

THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

Dear EC Publisher,

My name is Roland Hopper and I read every EC comic I can get my hands on. You said you were selling EC sets. I am sure these would not sell for the same price [as a comic] but I am interested in buying anyway, so would you send me a price list?

I also read you were going to put out a [32-pg] series of EC. If probably wouldn't get to Florida because the ones I have I got in the northern states. If so, could you please send me a price list for it, too.

My favorite EC is VAULT. The stories of the Vault-Keeper, The Crypt-Keeper and The Old Witch are so lifelike and chilling. I like them all!

I have two [earlier reprints] 64-pg GLAD HAUNT #1 and the 64-pg RCP HAUNT #1. I bought all my ECs at $20 apiece and well worth it and more. If you could send me a price list I would meet up with the Vault-Keeper himself or herself to get them.

Roland Hopper — Ponce de Leon, FL

Yes, we are selling complete sets of the EC Library (hardbacks) and individual volumes! If you bought original ECs for $20 each, you will be amused to know that is our price for a typical VOLUME (usually six comics)! You or any EC fan can get a price list from us at the address at the end of the letter column.

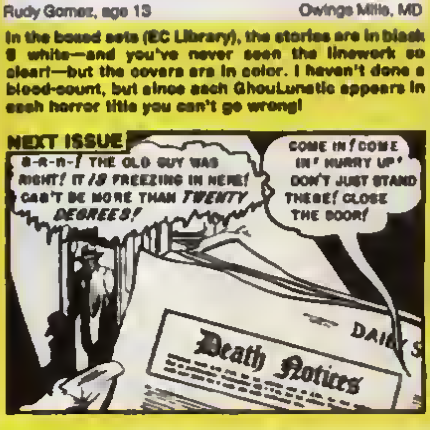
For your reference, I am the Vault-Keeper HIMSELF (Thanks for asking! Huh!)! —VK

Dear CK, VK and OW,

I love your comics. I'd like to know which of your comics are gorier and show more blood. I'm going to order an EC library boxed set, but I like the stories that involve gore or zombies. Are the boxed sets' stories in color? Any chance that the Vault-Keeper or the Old Witch can get TV shows of their own?

Rudy Gomez, age 13 — Owings Mills, MD

In the boxed sets (EC Library), the stories are in black & white—and you've never seen the linework so clear!—but the covers are in color. I haven't done a blood-count, but since each GhouLunatic appears in each horror title you can't go wrong!



So far, Witchie and I have trouble appearing on closed circuit security cameras! —VK

Dear VK,

I love all of your comics. I have to ask you and CK. Why does CK always talk about the Crypt of Terror, like at the beginning [of a story] he says "Welcome back to the Crypt of Terror."?

VK, I have all of your RCP comics 1-5 and also your Gladstone #1.

Rich True — Omaha, NE

Why, The Crypt-Keeper LIVES in the Crypt of Terror! And a ratty, no-class dump it is, too! I live in the Vault of Horror, and The Old Witch lives in that big pot, I guess.

Hey, Rich, why not get the REST of the RCP and Gladstone 64-pgers? See our ad in this comic. —VK

Dear VK,

I just bought [Vault #3]. I loved it. Now I'm hooked. Could I get your autograph? I drew a picture, hope you like it.

Tanner Smith — FT Smith, AR

I knew those fishhooks in my comics would work! I like your picture—who is that, Billy Batty as "Jason?" —VK

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I love your stories. [You're] the best of all the storytellers. I like the Crypt-Keeper but the Old Witch is rather boring. I have more VAULT than HAUNT or CRYPT. I make my own comics a lot. As a matter of fact I asked Russ Cochran to publish some of my comics. He said that they were just duplicates of the originals.

Chris Kappauf — Newark, DE

Yes! I am the best! Homer himself was a piker next to me! Russ was right to point out any duplication of someone else's work. The best way to learn to write & draw comics is to learn to write & draw PERIOD, then come up with your own comics or produce what someone will hire you to do. —VK

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I've just read VAULT #4 and was thoroughly engrossed in its creepy contents, which I lapped up like a bowl of Blood Soup in a Vampire Restaurant. Tasty! I like the front cover very much, with its excellent Johnny Craig drawing, very effective when combined with the lurid yellow-on-blue lettering. It's nice to see that the Vault-Keeper, the Crypt-Keeper and the Old Witch are back in town.

I especially like "Terror in the Swamp!", drawn by Al

Feldstein in his unique way. Not many comics these days take the reader to the shadowy and murky realms of the Okefenokee. I like the Vault-Keeper's crack about "they got swallowed up instead". That's cute. Johnny Craig's "Horror House!" is another fine [story]. [I reacted] with surprise and shock at the fate of the hoaxers being somehow driven to suicide and madness. I like the way in which there is no rational explanation for what happens at the end. I like a comic that's unpredictable. That final panel of "Report from the Grave" is also very effective as Doc of the Vault-Keeper's Club says "perhaps you'd like to apply" to the reader.

I reckon I've been missing out not buying VAULT. As a science-fiction enthusiast I went for the WEIRD SCIENCE first as I have great respect for the EC sf comics but my eyes boggled in the comic shop when I saw the cover of VAULT #4.

John Miller — Edinburgh, SCOTLAND

Welcome to the fold (spindle, mutilate)! I'm glad you could see well enuf to buy a copy of VAULT with your eyes all boggled! —VK

Dear EC Fans & The Vault-Keeper,

I got something to tell you guys. I just moved from West Virginia to Pennsylvania, and when I arrived I went right over to the comic book store to pick up some ECs. When I got there I couldn't find them, so I had to wait for the clerk to get off the phone with his girlfriend or something. When he did, I asked for EC, he thought I said DC and took me over to the BATMANs. I said, "No **EC**, like 'Tales from the Crypt!'" Then he took me over to the bottom of the shelf and all the way in the back was one copy of VAULT #4. Then he really surprised me by saying, "I always thought EC was a dead title." I right away said, "No Way! I love the EC line, I think they're a lot more interesting than the super hero comics." Then he surprised me for a second time by saying, "Really? I'll have to try one sometime." EC = Dead Title?? No Way!! A dead-dicated reader.

Chris Kurpiel — address unknown

Much as I like zombies, Marvel (or DC) Zombies have a lot to learn. And I'm proud my fans, like you, Chris, will act as ominous ombudsmen and learn 'em for me! —VK

My Darling Vault-Keeper,

My love letter to CK was printed in SHOCK #3. His reply? "Take a number." Could he have been any more insulting? He'd better watch out. You know the saying, "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." (Especially one with a new meat grinder.)

Now that he has shown his true colors, I realize that you are the only decaying corpse for me. So what do you say? Care to join me for a graveyard stroll? (I'm sure you will after you find what's left of CK.)

Cemetery life can get so boring. My neighbors are such stiffs! I would love to have anyone, dead or alive, human or not—write me at one of my favorite "haunts" [address below].

Suzanne Hawe — RT 3 Box 36, Miami, OK 74354

Another frail who's seen the light! Maybe I'll swing the ol' hearse past your cemetery gates some p.m. and give you a honk (I always was a big hit with the tomatoes 'cause I know how to treat 'em, and I KNOW that what women like in a man can't have changed since the 50s!). I bet a girl with a meat grinder is a great little cook! The only date CK can get is Friday the 13th! —VK

Dear Vault-Keeper,

VAULT #4 was the best so far! "Horror House" was almost exactly like "House of Horror" from HAUNT #1. We found out nothing. And since Johnny Craig writes what he draws, he must have written "Horror House!" And since "Horror House" is exactly the same as "House of Horror", Johnny must have written the unimaginative "House of Horror" in the same issue (HAUNT #1) as the imaginative "The Wall". I don't understand.

Another thing I don't understand is why did the comics have such weak plots in the early 50s, but became scarier and more CRUEL (like "Buried Alive!", my favorite story in VAULT #4) in the mid 50s?

Even though I didn't like the storyline for "House of Horror", I loved the amazing and startling drawing of the woman who had seen the ghosts!

I like VAULT #4's "Terror in the Swamp!" better than "The Thing in the Swamp!" because you saw the two young men being eaten. GOOD WORK!

Oliver Buckel — Erie, PA

Altho you are almost always right in assuming a Craig-drawn story is from a Craig-written script, we are almost certain "House of Horror" was a Feldstein script. And "House of Horror" is typical of the differences between the early stuff and the later stuff. It simply took me a while to train the talented but work-a-day EC stable to be the horror comic geniuses they became! Up till then, NOBODY had got it right! —VK

Dear Vault-Keeper,

When I read Al Feldstein's "Terror in The Swamp!" in VAULT #4, I thought it seemed familiar. Looking through my collection, I found the same story in HAUNT #1, called "The Thing in The Swamp!" What's the deal? Why did Feldstein and EC run the same story twice in one year with only minor variations? It's debatable whether the more explicit ending improves the story any, but I think the original ending is better since it allows you to use your imagination.

Barry McCollum — Alton, IL

The motivation for re-running "Swamp!" is lost in the mists of time, but I bet for MY version that after a 5-pg appetizer in "Swamp!" it'd be cheating not to show the MAIN COURSE! —VK

NEXT ISSUE

NOTHING WAS DAID! THE BUTLER STIFFENED... HIS FACE A GHOSTLY PALLOR... AND BEADS OF SWEAT STOOD OUT ON HIS BROW. HE WAS IN DEATHLY FEAR, BUT HE REMAINED BY THE BED, STARING FIXEDLY AT THE WALL FROM WHICH THE SOUNDS CAME! WITH EACH HOUR, THE TENSION MOUNTED...

Dear VK,

As I was reading "Terror in the Swamp!" in VAULT #4, the story seemed to be familiar. I looked through back issues and sure enough, the same story had been in HAUNT #1. Only the title and the splash page had been changed, and an extra panel had been squeezed in at the very end of the story. I had thought that repeating stories from earlier issues is something that would only be resorted to by the lesser comics. That all seemed rather sloppy for such a high quality outfit as EC. In fact, Balzac may well have sent his letter about "crap" he'd "already seen" to EC back in 1950.

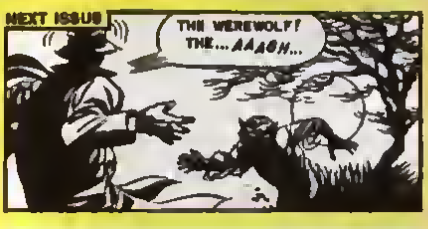
If Balzac [VAULT #4 loool] is unhappy now, wait until January of 1996. That is when CRYPT begins a run of a solid year and a half of issues of CRYPT that had already been published by either you or Gladstone. Also during that period will be three issues of VAULT, four issues of HAUNT, four issues of CRIME, four issues of WEIRD SCIENCE, and three issues of WEIRD FANTASY that will be crap that Balzac has already seen. If a lot of your readers are like Balzac, then your sales could take a real nose dive during that period. I hope that you will be able to make it through that period so that the rest of us will be able to get a complete collection of EC comics.

That just shows to go you that there is one bad thing about getting the EC Library volumes. Once I have gotten the complete set of Library volumes, then all of the comics that are published from then on will be crap that I have already seen. That leaves me in a real dilemma. If I read the Library volumes first, then the comics will all be crap that I have already seen. But if I read the comics first then all the stuff in the Library volumes will be crap that I have already seen. I guess that it is a lucky thing that good literature is something that needs to be read many times over.

Warren Standifird — Sunnyvale, CA

Consider this, Warren: In 1996 we may be sold out of ALL the 64-pgers, and people will be loathe to handle their precious collectibles—they'll just have to rely on our chronological 32-pgers for reading! We'll get 'em coming and going (I hope)! In EC's defense, they only re-ran maybe four stories; I'd hate to try and count how many Atlas, et al, recycled during the 50s! —VK

Delzant Sylvain — Paris, FRANCE



Dear Mr. Cochran,

I love your line of EC reprints. I started reading them when they first came out, and have not stopped! The colors are so vivid, and the original artwork reproduced in such clarity. AMAZING! I am one of several devoted readers at my local comic shop here in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. Please keep up the great work, Russ!

The secret behind the success lies in the books' ability to transcend time. These stories are so popular now, you will [be able to publish] many more issues to come!

George P. McNamara — Leominister, MA

Yes! —VK

Dear VK,

How come you, CK and OW always talk about each other and call each other knotheads and things like that? Also, how did you get the idea to do horror stories?

Chad Dewall — Englewood, CO

I don't know what those two goonie GhoulLunatics are up to, but I call a spade a spade and a knothead a knothead! I know they're knotheads 'cause of all the sap they produce! Woodpeckers don't know whether to flit or go fly when they see 'em! —VK

Dear Vault-Keeper,

I just love VAULT. It has the best stories in it that I've ever read. My favorite stories are "The Dead Will Return!", "And All Through the House", "Voodoo Vengeance!", "Miscalculation!" and "Beauty Rest". I also have all the issues of CRYPT. All my friends love them, too. I sure wish I could get involved with making these EC comics, because I have a few creepy stories up my sleeve, too! I hope to write to you again. I'm eleven years old.

Audrey Sheehan — Reading, MA

Let's see, this means I can look for your next letter in 2004. Meantime, let those creepy stories creep out of your sleeve, down your hand and onto some paper. The best way to become a writer is to write—incessantly! —VK

Also available this month are WEIRD FANTASY and TWO-FISTED TALES. Watch for HAUNT, WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY and CRIME next month. Don't forget CRYPT, WEIRD SCIENCE and SHOCK. Get them at your local comic book shop or SUBSCRIBE (see our ad in this comic)!

BACK ISSUES: CRYPT #1, $3 each. All others up to issue #5, $1.50 each. Issues #4 and up, $2 each. Add $5 per order ($10 outside US) for S&H.

We want letters! Write to:
VAULT
RUSS COCHRAN
POB 469
WEST PLAINS MO 65775

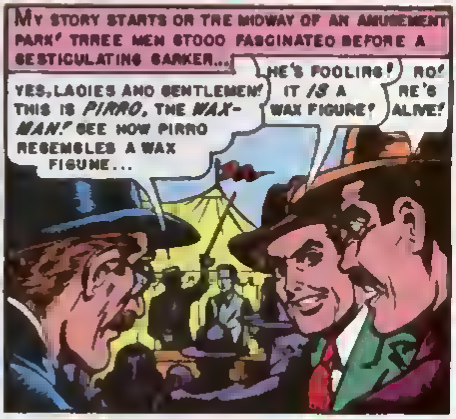
THIS COMIC REPRINTS
VAULT OF HORROR "#18" (#5, DEC 50/JAN 51)

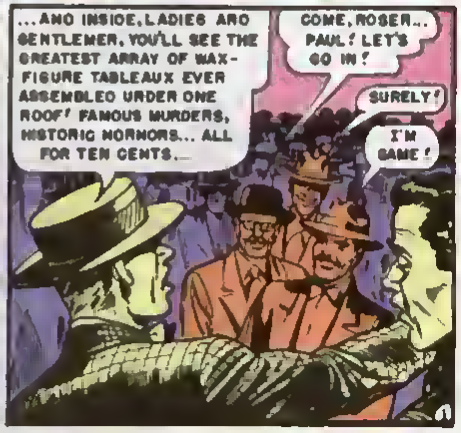
COVER by Johnny Craig
"Werewolf Concerto!" — Johnny Craig
"Fitting Punishment" — Graham Ingels
"The Grave Wager" — Jack Kamen
"Escape!" — Al Feldstein

Here is a ghastly yarn designed to terrorize you! I call it...

THE GRAVE WAGER

KAMEN



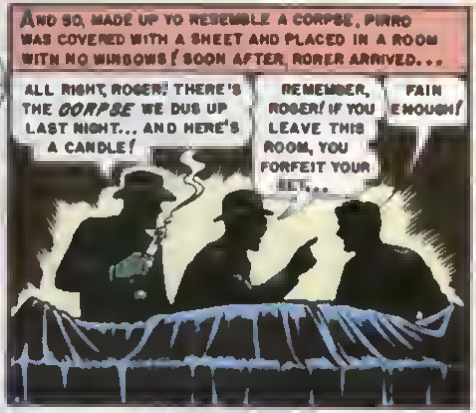


THE THREE MEN... ROSEN KANE, PAUL BOND, AND CLYDE LAKE... PAYED THEIR ADMISSIONS INTO THE WAX MUSEUM!
THAT PIANO SUY CERTAINLY LOOKED LIKE WAX...
AND THESE WAX FIGURES IN HERE LOOK ALMOST ALIVE!
UGH! WHAT A HORRIBLE SCENE! COME! LET US LEAVE!
YES! THE FIGURES OF THE VICTIMS LOOK LIKE ACTUAL CORPSES!
WHAT'S WRONG, PAUL...CLYDE? WEAK STOMACHS?
AND YOU, NO DOUST, HAVE A STRONG STOMACH!
WELL, THE SIGHT OF A CORPSE NEVER BOTHERED ME!
IT WOULD IF YOU WERE ALONE WITH IT!
NONSENSE! IT WOULDN'T BOTHER ME ONE BIT!
I HAVE TWENTY DOLLARS IN MY WALLET THAT SAYS YOU WOULDN'T SPEND A NIGHT ALONE WITH A CORPSE!
WAX MUSEUM
I'D DO IT FOR FIFTY!
WHAT SAY, CLYDE? SHALL WE MAKE IT FIFTY TOGETHER?
ALL RIGHT! I'LL BET!
NOW, YOU'RE BOTH BETTING ME FIFTY DOLLARS THAT I WON'T SPEND A NIGHT ALONE IN A ROOM WITH A CORPSE, RIGHT?
RIGHT!
OKAY! IT'S A BET! ONLY THERE'S ONE SMALL DETAIL! WHERE DO WE GET THE CORPSE?
HUH?
OH!

WHAT SAY WE DIG ONE UP?
ROB A GRAVE?
SAY THIS IS TURNING INTO FUN!
OH, STOP IT, ROGER! YOU'RE JUST PUTTING ON AN ACT!
NO, I'M NOT! I'M SERIOUS!
WELL, I DON'T THINK THAT ROBBING A GRAVE IS FUN.. BUT I'LL AGREE TO IT IF YOU BOTH WANT TO...
GOOD! TONIGHT!
THAT NIGHT, AT THE APPOINTED HOUR, THE SHADOWS OF THREE MEN FELL ACROSS WEATHER-BEATEN TOMBSTONES...
HERE'S A FRESH GRAVE!
START DIGGING!
DON'T GIVE ORDERS!
SLOWLY, AN EVEN WIDENING BLACK PIT APPEARED! THEN...
I'VE STRUCK THE COFFIN!
HERE'S A CROW BAR!
I'LL UNFOLD THE SHEET!
THE COFFIN WAS PRIED OPEN...
USH! HE LOOKS A LITTLE BLUER THAN THOSE WAX FIGURES!
LIFT HIM OUT! PUT HIM ON THE SHEET!
. AND THEN WE'LL WRAP HIM UP..
THEIR JOB FINISHED, THE THREE MEN CARRIED THEIR GRUESOME PRIZE, WRAPPED IN A SHEET, FROM THE GRAVEYARD....
UNTIL TOMORROW NIGHT, GENTLEMEN!
YES, ROGER! AT MY PLACE! WE'LL HAVE EVERYTHING ARRANGED!
3

THE TWO MEN WITH THE SHEETED CORPSE STOOD WATCHING AS ROGER DISAPPEARED DOWN THE ROAD! THEN...
COME, CLYDE! HELP ME CARRY THE BODY BACK INTO THE CEMETERY!
WHAT?
WE'RE GOING TO PUT THE BODY BACK INTO THE GRAVE...
BUT THE MAGE!
I HAVE A MUCH BETTER PLAN! AND WE DON'T NEED A BODY!
WHAT IS YOUR PLAN, PAUL?
AS THE TWO MEN, IN THE DARKNESS OF THE CEMETERY MIGHT, DUG... PAUL EXPLAINED HIS PLAN...
YOU REMEMBER THAT PIRRO GUY... THE WAX-MAN?
WHY, YES!
HE WILL BE OUR CORPSE...
OH, NOW I GET IT! AND TOMORROW NIGHT, WHEN ROGER IS ALONE WITH HIM...
RIGHT! WE'LL HAVE PIRRO TAKE A LITTLE COCKYNESS OUT OF HIM!
NOW, I SAY THIS IS GOING TO BE FUN!
THE TWO MEN... THEIR JOB OF REPLACING THE STOLEN CORPSE COMPLETED... SAUNTERED OFF ACROSS THE CEMETERY! THEIR LAUGHTER DRIFTED BACK... ECHOING FROM HEADSTONE TO HEADSTONE...
HA
HA
HA
HA HA
HA
HA

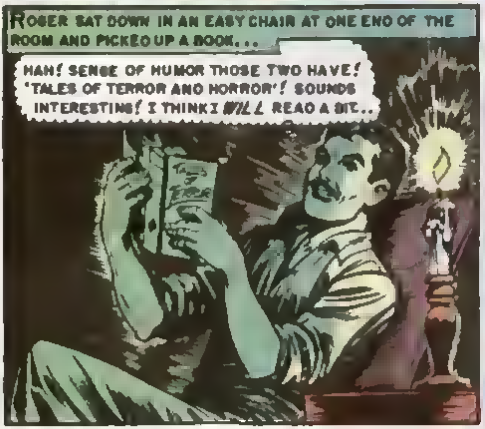
THE NEXT EVENING, AN HOUR OR SO BEFORE ROGER WAS DUE TO SHOW UP...
THIS IS MR. PIRRO CLYDE! I'VE EXPLAINED MY PLAN TO HIM...
...AND YOU AGREE TO IT?
FOR FIFTY DOLLARS, I'D DO ANYTHING!

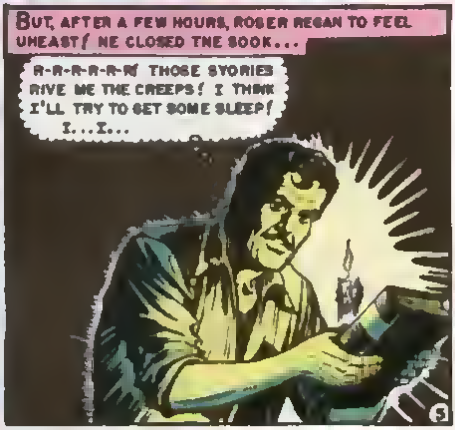

AND SO, MADE UP TO RESEMBLE A CORPSE, PIRRO WAS COVERED WITH A SHEET AND PLACED IN A ROOM WITH NO WINDOWS! SOON AFTER, ROGER ARRIVED...
ALL RIGHT, ROGER! THERE'S THE CORPSE WE DUG UP LAST NIGHT... AND HERE'S A CANDLE!
REMEMBER, ROGER! IF YOU LEAVE THIS ROOM, YOU FORFEIT YOUR SHARE...
FAIR ENOUGH!

WE'LL COME BACK FOR YOU AT DAYBREAK!
HAVE A NICE NIGHT!

GOODNIGHT, ROGER!
GOODNIGHT, GENTLEMEN!

ROGER TURNED TOWARD THE SHROUDED FIGURE AND SMILED...
THIS IS GOING TO BE THE EASIEST FIFTY BUCKS I'VE EVER MADE...


ROGER SAT DOWN IN AN EASY CHAIR AT ONE END OF THE ROOM AND PICKED UP A BOOK...
HAH! SENSE OF HUMOR THOSE TWO HAVE! 'TALES OF TERROR AND HORROR'! SOUNDS INTERESTING! I THINK I WILL READ A BIT...


BUT, AFTER A FEW HOURS, ROGER BEGAN TO FEEL UNEASY! HE CLOSED THE BOOK...
R-R-R-R-R-R! THOSE STORIES GIVE ME THE CREEPS! I THINK I'LL TRY TO GET SOME SLEEP! I...I...

WHAT THE...?
GOOD LORD!
NO! NO!
K-K-KEEP AWAY! KEEP AWAY!
AS DAWN WAS BREAKING, PAUL AND CLYDE MADE THEIR WAY TO THE ROOM...
THE DOOR IS CLOSED! DO YOU THINK HE'LL BE THERE?
I HOPE NOT! I EXPECTED TO PAY MR. PIRRO WITH THE FIFTY DOLLARS THAT ROGER BET US!
SLOWLY THE DOOR SWUNG OPEN...
LOOK, CLYDE! ROGER... HE...HE...
HE'S SITTING IN THE CORNER WHIMPERING LIKE A SCARED PUPPY! AND HIS HAIR HAS TURNED SNOW WHITE!
WHAT HAVE WE DONE, CLYDE? PIRRO! HE...HE'S DEAD! BEATEN TO A PULP...
LORD HELP US, PAUL! ROGER IS A RAVING MANIAC! AND WE... WE ARE MURDERERS!

THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

SO! HEE, HEE! WE MEET AGAIN! WELCOME! WELCOME, HORROR FANS! THE FIRE UNDER MY CAULDRON IS LIT... AND EVEN NOW, MY EVIL BREW IS GURGLING AND BUBBLING! THIS TIME, I HAVE COOKED UP A DELIGHTFULLY CHILLING LITTLE MORSEL WHICH I TRUST WILL WARM YOUR COLD HEARTS! COME CLOSER NOW, AND GAZE INTO THE STEAMING CONTENTS OF MY CAULDRON, AS MY STORY UNFOLDS! I CALL THIS SPINE-TINGLING TALE...

ESCAPE!

THE GRUMBLING CONVICTS SET TO WORK AT THE BACK-BREAKING TASK OF REMOVING THE HUGE PILE OF BRICKS FROM THE TRUCK...
LET'S GO, LUGER!
OKAY! OKAY!
RELUCTANTLY, ONE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE GREY-CLAD GROUP ROLLS HIS WHEELBARROW UP TO THE TRUCK...
HAW! IF THE BOYS BACK IN THE CITY COULD SEE YOU NOW, LUGER...
SHADDUP, CHEEP!
PETE LUGER HAS ONCE BEEN THE KING OF A NATION-WIDE CRIME SYNDICATE...
CREEP, HUH? DON'T BE SURPRISED IF YOU GET A PICK-AXE IN YOUR SKULL ONE OF THESE DAYS, LUGER!
CUT IT, YOU SUYS! THE GUARD'S EYIN' YOU!
AND SO, THE DAY PASSED... AND THE SHICKS WERE ALL UNLOADED AND STACKED NEATLY BESIDE THE CELL BLOCK...
WHEW! I'M SEAT...
S'MATTER, LUGER? YUH SOIL YEH LILLY-WHITE HANDS?
OKAY, MEH! LINE UP!
THE RAGGED SROUP, THEIR SHIRTS SOAKED WITH SWEAT, LINED UP FOR THE MARCH BACH TO THEIN CELLS...
ANOTHER CRACK LIKE THAT, BONE-HEAD, AND YOU'LL BE CHEWIN' ONE OF THOSE BRICKS...
HEY, LOOK! A HEARSE!
SLOWLY, THE OMINOUS BLACK TRUCK PULLED UP BEFORE A SMALL DOOR...
WHAT'S THAT PLACE?
THE PRISON MORGUE!
BONE YARDBIRD MUSTA CROAKED!
THE DOOR OPENED, AND A SIMPLE PINE BOX WAS CARRIED OUT...
THEY TANE HIM INTO TOWN AND SURY THE POOR JOE IN 'POTTER'S FIELD'!
UNLESS HIS FAMILY WANTS HIM...
...AND WHOSE WOULD?

THE NEXT DAY, THERE WAS ANOTHER TRUCK... AND ANOTHEN PILE OF BNICKS TO BE UNLOADED...
GASP...NY BACK IS KILLIN' ME! WHAT'S ALL THESE BRICKS FOR, ANYWAY?
DARNED IF I KNOW! ...BUILDING, I GUESS!
THAT NIGHT, AS PETE LUGER, ONE TIME BIG-SHOT, LAY ON HIS PNISON COT...
WHEW! ANOTHER DAY OF UNLOADING THOSE BRICKS WILL KILL ME!
THEN THEY'LL BE CARRYIN' ME OUTTA HERE IN A PINE BOX, JUST LIKE THEY DID WITH THAT POOR JOE, YESTERDAY...
IT'S TERRIFIC! WHAT A WAY TO BREAK OUT OF THIS DUMP! GET CARRIED OUT IN A PINE BOX...
THE NEXT DAY, PETE LUGEN FOUND HIMSELF UNLOADING ANOTHEN TRUCK-LOAD OF BRICKS... BUT THIS TIME HIS MIND WAS ON OTHEN THINGS...
LOOK AT LUGER! HE'S WORKIN' LIKE A BEAVER!
HE'S THINKIN' ABOUT SOMETHIN'! I SEEN THAT LOOK WHEN I WAS WORKIN' FOR HIM! HE'S MAKIN' PLANS!
INDEED, PETE LUGEN WAS MAKING PLANS! PLANS TO ESCAPE FROM THE WALLS THAT IMPRISONED HIM...
LOOK, LUGEN! ANOTHER HEARSE!
FOR CONNELLY! HE GOT THE JUICE LAST WEEK!
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AGAIN, A PLAIN PINE BOX WAS CARRIED OUT THE SMALL DOOR, AND LIFTED INTO THE BLACK CARRIER OF THE DEAD...
ER.. HOW DO YOU GET ASSIGNED TO THE PRISON MORGUE, ED?
YEP! CONNELLY'S GOIN' TO 'POTTER'S FIELD'..
ARE YOU KIDDIN'? NOBODY WANTS THAT JOB! ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS VOLUNTEER!
WHY?
OH, NOTHING! I WAS JUST WONDERING!
THE NEXT DAY, PETE LUGER VOLUNTEERED FOR THE JOB OF MORGUE-ATTENDANT AT THE PRISON MORGUE...
ALL RIGHT, BODKIN! YOU REPORT TO THE BRICK PILE! LUGER, HERE, WANTS YOUR JOB!
HE CAN HAVE IT! I'D RATHER UNLOAD BRICKS, ANYTIME!
PRISON MORGU
AND SO, PETE LUGER HAD TAKEN THE FIRST STEP IN HIS INTRICATE PLAN TO ESCAPE FROM STATE PRISON...
MAN! LOOK AT THOSE POOR SUCKERS BREAKING THEIR BACKS ON THAT BRICK PILE, WHILE I SIT HERE WITH SOME HARMLESS STIFFS...
AND THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THEY'RE MAKING! THAT'S THE PAYOFF!
A WEEK WENT BY! THEN, ONE DAY...
UNLESS HE GETS A LAST MINUTE REPRIEVE, LUGER, THAT GREYSON GUY SETS THE CHAIR TONIGHT...
.. AND I GET SOME BUSINESS!
RIGHT! YOU'LL KEEP HIM IN THE MORGUE HERE FOR ONE WEEK! IF NO ONE CLAIMS THE BODY..
I KNOW! CUT HE GOES!

GET SOME TOOLS FROM CARPENTRY AND GET BUSY ON A COFFIN!
OKAY, GUARD! RIGHT AWAY!
THAT NIGHT, LUGER SCRIBBLED A HASTY NOTE TO THE BOYS ON THE OUTSIDE...
...COME VISIT ME. I'M LONELY. PETE
ON THE FOLLOWING VISITING DAY, PETE LUGER'S OLD LIEUTENANT PAID A CALL...
WHAT'S UP, PETE?
I'M BREAKIN' OUT! I GOT A PLAN... AND YOU GUYS GOTTA HELP!
EVER WARY OF THE GUARDS THAT PACED THE VISITING ROOM, PETE UNFOLDED HIS PLAN...
...AND WHEN THE HEARSE PULLS OUT OF THE PRISON YARD, YOU TRAIL IT! AT A SAFE SPOT...TAKE OVER! I'LL BE IN THE COFFIN...
IN THE COFFIN!
YEAH! DON'T ASK QUESTIONS! JUST FOLLOW MY INSTRUCTIONS! TOMORROW KEEP A SHARP WATCH FOR THE HEARSE...
OKAY, LUGER! TIME'S UP!
PETE LUGER WENT BACK TO THE MORGUE AND GAZED OUT OF THE WINDOW...
HMMMM! THEY'VE ALMOST COMPLETED WHATEVER IT IS THEY'RE BUILDING! LOOKS LIKE A CHIMNEY!
SUCKERS! HAULIN' THOSE BRICKS WHILE I SIT AROUND HERE! AND TOMORROW...NAH... I GET OUT!
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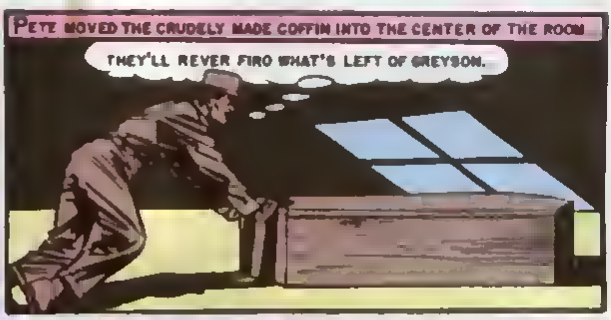
THE NEXT DAY...
GET GREYSOR INTO HIS COFFIN, LUGER! TWO MEN WILL BE HERE TO PICK HIM UP AT TWO-O'CLOCK SHARP!
O.K., GUARD! TWO O'CLOCK!


PETE MOVED THE CRUDELY MADE COFFIN INTO THE CENTER OF THE ROOM
THEY'LL NEVER FIND WHAT'S LEFT OF GREYSON.

AND THEN, HE CLIMBED IN...
WHAT A PLAN! BRILLIANT! BRILLIANT!

AT TWO O'CLOCK, TWO CONVICTS ENTERED...
HEY, LUGER! WE...
HE AIN'T AROUND!

MUSTA WENT TO CHOW! WELL! GRAB AR END!
WAIT! LOOK! THE COFFIN...

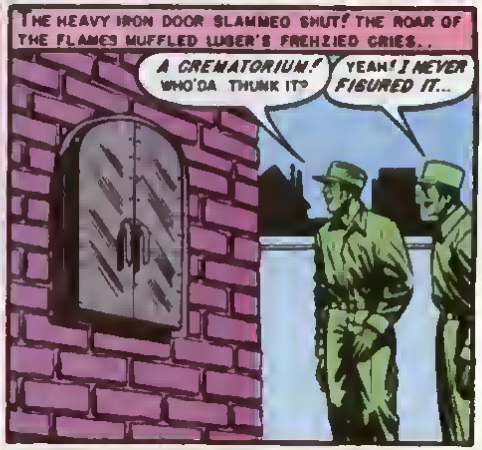
S'MATTER!
IT AIN'T NAILED DOWN!

QUICKLY, THE CONVICT REACHED FOR THE HAMMER AND NAILS...
LEAVE IT TO LUGER TO LEAVE A JOB UNFINISHED...THE CRUM!

OKAY, JAKE! LET'S GO! GRAB AN END!
YEAH!
ONLY A FEW MORE MINUTES...

...THEN... FREEDOM!
Y'KNOW, I ALWAYS WONDERED WHAT THAT WAS WE WERE BUILDIN' WITH THOSE BRICKS...

YEAH! SO DID I!


THE HEAVY IRON DOOR SLAMMED SHUT! THE ROAR OF THE FLAMES MUFFLED LUGER'S FRENZIED CRIES..
A CREMATORIUM! WHO'DA THUNK IT?
YEAH! I NEVER FIGURED IT...

HEH...HEH! WELL, KIDDIES! NEITHER DID PETE LUGER! HE WAS SURE HE HAD A HOT IDEA! I'LL BET HE'S ALL BURNED UP ABOUT IT NOW, THOUGH! WELL, IT ONLY GOES TO SHOW.. DON'T COUNT YOUR BRICKS BEFORE THE BUILDING IS MADE.. OR IT MIGHT BACK FIRE..HEE-HEE... AS IT DID ON POOR PETER! I HOPE MY LITTLE TALE FOR THIS ISSUE SCORCHED YOU! I'LL TRY TO HAVE ANOTHER HEART-WARMER NEXT ISSUE! BYE, NOW... AND DON'T FORGET TO WRITE TO THE VAULT-KEEPER AND LET HIM KNOW WHAT YOU THINK OF... AHEM... OUR BOOK...HEE, HEE!
ADDRESS YOUR LETTERS TO... THE VAULT-KEEPER, RUSS COCHRAN, POB 483, WEST PLAINS, MO 65775

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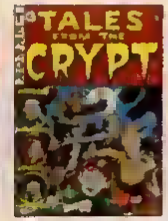

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